

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3071

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 2029

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE CUTS IMET AND FMS
CREDITS FOR PARAGUAY

REF: STATE 122731

1. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE TIMING OF THE SENATE FOREIGN
RELATIONS COMMITTEE ACTION TO CUT FMS CREDITS AND THE MILITARY
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PARAGUAY FROM THE FY 1979 FOREIGN ASS-
ISTANCE BILL COULD NOT BE MUCH WORSE. FOR SOME MONTHS NOW, THE
PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING FAVORABLE STEPS TO IM-
PROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. WE HAVE TRIED TO REINFORCE
THIS TREND WITH SOME TANGIBLE RESULTS.

2. WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING:

(A) THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS HAS DROPPED FROM
250 LAST JULY TO 177 IN JANUARY AND, FINALLY, TO 86 AS OF APRIL
30. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ALL WILL BE JUDICIALLY PROCESSED
OR RELEASED PRIOR TO THE JUNE OASGA.

(B) THE STATE OF SIEGE HAS BEEN LIFTED FROM ALL DISTRICTS
IN PARAGUAY EXCEPT THE CAPITAL AND WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED BY GOP
OFFICIALS THAT IT WILL BE TOTALLY LIFTED VERY SOON.

(C) THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM HAS STARTED TO FUNCTION MORE
INDEPENDENTLY AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE HANDLING OF THE CHRIST-
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IAN TRAD UNIONISTS AND RURAL ACTIVITSTS AND THE PRIMERO DO
MARZO CASES.

3. AMB MARIO LOPEZ ESCOBAR ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT PARA-
GUAY WOULD ACCEPT A VISIT FROM THE IAHRG. WHILE PRESIDENT
STROESSNER HAS NOT YET CONFIRMED THIS WE ARE CONFIDENT IT
WILL BE DONE SOON DESPITE STRONG COUNTER PRESSURES LOCALLY

AND FROM BRAZIL AND URUGUAY.

4. WE BELIEVE THE PROGRESS MENTIONED ABOVE DOES REPRESENT
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE PARAGUAYAN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
AND WOULD SUGGEST:

(A) THAT THE SFRC STAFFERS BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE ON
THESE DEVELOPMENTS; AND

(B) IF THE GOP SETS A DATE FOR AN IAHRC VISIT WE WOULD
URGE THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO CHANGE THE BILL TO DELETE
THE CUTS IMPOSED AGAINST PARAGUAY. OTHERWISE, OUR ACTION
WILL UNDERMINE OUR EFFORTS AND THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WITHIN
THE GOP WHO ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE PARAGUAY'S HUMAN RIGHTS
PERFORMANCE. CONVERSELY, IT WILL STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE
HARDLINERS WHO URGE SUPPRESSION OF ALL DISSIDENCE AND THE
REJECTION OF "INTERVENTIONIST" DEMANDS THAT PARAGUAY
IMPROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

(C) IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE MILITARY AS AN
INSTITUTION HAS A RELATIVELY CLEAN RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS.
IT IS THE NATIONAL POLICE WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
ATROCITIES AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP THE DISTINCTION, FOR
THE SAME REASONS CITED IN PARAGRAPH 4(B).

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